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COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
Child Support Services Department



May 15, 2003

TO: Each Supervisor

FROM: Philip L. Browning
Director

SUBJECT: **RESPONSES TO AUDITOR-CONTROLLER'S LOCATE PROCESS
REVIEW**

On April 11, 2003, the Auditor-Controller published a report of the Child Support Services Department's locate process review. I was asked to draft responses to the fourteen recommendations suggested by the Auditor-Controller's Office. Department staff have fully reviewed the report.

I am pleased to report that we are in general agreement with most of the recommendations, and the department has already begun taking steps to implement them. Along with the Auditor-Controller, we are closely working with the State Child Support Services Department and the Franchise Tax Board to maximize the benefits of our new locate tools.

Attached are the responses to the fourteen recommendations.

PLB:tv

Attachment

c: Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors
Auditor-Controller
Child Support Advisory Board

RESPONSES TO THE AUDITOR-CONTROLLER'S LOCATE PROCESS REVIEW

RECOMMENDATION #1

Require ARS programmers to investigate why post office verification letters were not sent in all cases and take corrective actions.

RESPONSE:

We agree with the recommendation. Programmatic locate processing problems have been identified. Corrections are in process to ensure that post office verification letters are sent when appropriate. A strategy to generate postal checks that did not originally get initiated and sent has been formulated. The estimated completion of these two efforts is September, 2003.

RECOMMENDATION # 2

Evaluate modifying ARS to automatically generate follow-up residence address verification letters after 30 days, or ensure ARS does not delete follow-up tasks and staff send follow-up letter as required.

RESPONSE:

We agree with the recommendation. The system does initiate a user task when the postal check verification form has not been returned in 30 days. There is a current request to prevent the deletion of the follow-up task by a worker until action has been taken on the task. This will insure that the user will follow up when the postal verification form has not been returned.

RECOMMENDATION # 3

Require ARS programmers to investigate the reason why employer verification letters were not sent and to initiate corrective actions as appropriate.

RESPONSE:

We agree with the recommendation. As stated in the response to recommendation #1, programmatic locate processing problems have been identified and corrections are in process to ensure that employment verification letters are sent when appropriate. A strategy to generate employment verification letters that did not originally get initiated and sent has been formulated. The estimated completion of these two efforts is September, 2003.

RECOMMENDATION # 4

Remind staff to ensure that employment verification information is entered timely into ARS.

RESPONSE:

We agree with the recommendation. Staff are advised by supervisors via monthly meetings and training updates that the information should be updated timely.

RECOMMENDATION # 5

Develop procedures for staff to identify and follow-up on all cases where employers do not respond to verification letters.

RESPONSE:

We agree with the recommendation. The system will be modified to initiate a worker task when the 2nd employment verification letter has not been returned. The estimated completion of this effort is September, 2003.

RECOMMENDATION # 6

Department management ensure that proper priority is placed on processing the returned employment verification forms.

RESPONSE:

We agree with the recommendation. Branch Operations management is currently working on a priority system to enable staff to prioritize the large caseloads. Processing the employment verifications forms is one of the areas that have been identified as contributing to the improvement of current support. Therefore, the divisions are currently processing the forms on an overtime basis. Additionally, ARS is about to implement a bar coding process of all letters that are sent to employers. The barcode will allow mass updating, with little user intervention, of address and employer status. If a verification letter is returned indicating a NCP works for the employer, the letter is scanned and a batch process updates the employer. If a wage assignment is appropriate, a wage assignment will then print and be mailed to the employer.

RECOMMENDATION # 7

Department management evaluate whether it should eliminate the address verification process and proceed with serving documents needed to collect child support and issuing wage assignments immediately upon receiving address information.

RESPONSE:

We agree that this concept should be considered. Currently, the system will initiate process service packages on active/unverified place of employment. A service package will also be initiated when there is an active/verified home address. Income Withholding documents are currently generated on unverified employment information through the Federal Case Registry interface.

RECOMMENDATION # 8

Department management periodically evaluate the effectiveness of locate resources being utilized, and research other sources of information to locate NCPs.

RESPONSE:

We agree with the recommendation. The department is actively working on developing effective methods for utilizing the various resource tools that CSSD has access to. In the last 6 months, the department has obtained access to various tools including MEDS/IEVS, DMV and Case Worker Query Tool (CWQT). Projects are currently being tested by the locate teams. The locate teams will track the sources that yielded the information. The training division, along with the Research and Development Division, will use this information together with verbal input from the team to assess the effectiveness of the locate efforts. In addition, we have partnered with the Franchise Tax Board (FTB) Child Support Collections Unit to train our staff in established manual collection procedures, which have proven successful for FTB. The FTB Manual Collection Training Project commenced the week of April 21, 2003 on our Commerce campus, and ended May 6. Hands-on training will be provided at our Torrance division in the next week. The Torrance staff will work sets of identified cases to find the best locate and collection practices for our County's caseload. Once these "best practices" are identified, FTB and our Training and Development staff will produce a Manual Collections Procedural Manual and training modules, which will be rolled out to our entire department.

RECOMMENDATION # 9

Department management develop written procedures to monitor and evaluate the success of supplemental locate vendors on an on-going basis.

RESPONSE:

With the advent of the Federal Case Registry (FCR) and other Federal and State locators, CSSD has seen an increased number of positive locates for NCPs. Since we have better utilized Federal and State locate tools, we decided to terminate the contracts with supplemental locate vendors, which were too costly and not as productive as the resources we now have.

RECOMMENDATION # 10

Develop monthly exception reports to alert FSOs of cases that are experiencing locate problems, and require staff to follow up on cases where appropriate action.

RESPONSE:

We agree with the recommendation. Current exception reports will be modified to assist users, along with ad hoc reports, that will identify cases where locating the NCP has proved to have been futile. The estimated completion of this effort is September, 2003.

RECOMMENDATION # 11

Department management comply with Family Code 17401 by sending notices to CPs when they provide inaccurate information.

RESPONSE:

With the concurrence of the department's Legal Counsel, we believe that the department is complying with Family Code 17401. However, we agree with the recommendation that sending the CP a notice when she provides inaccurate information may better our chances of locating the NCP. ARS has referred this issue to the Consortia Forms Committee to develop an appropriate letter to be sent to the Custodial Parent when inaccurate information has been provided.

RECOMMENDATION # 12

Ensure co-locate FSOs complete all relevant screens in LEADER.

RESPONSE:

For FSOs, updating LEADER is limited to a certain amount of screens. Co-locate staff update the LEADER screens they have access to, but ultimately, it is the Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) Eligibility Worker's function to update all screens that FSOs do not have access to. Generally, on reapplications, the FSOs are unable to update the information onto LEADER, but enter it on ARS.

RECOMMENDATION # 13

Ensure co-locate FSOs appropriately inform the CP of the purpose of all documentation that must be signed and how the information will be used.

RESPONSE:

We agree with the recommendation. In April, 2003, all co-locate staff were officially instructed to explain information on a form designed by CSSD called "Are You Aware." This form is used to help CPs understand our services and explains their rights and responsibilities. The CP is required to sign this form, which is kept in his/her case.

RECOMMENDATION # 14

Train FSOs with appropriate interviewing skills, such as asking open-ended questions.

RESPONSE:

We agree with the recommendation. Staff was given training entitled "The Art and Science of Interviewing Skills" given by Jim Wesson. The training session was structured according to the needs of FSOs, particularly co-locate staff, so that their examples were incorporated into the training.